

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CU-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 HEW-04 OMB-01
MCT-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 PC-01 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 OC-06
CCO-00 /088 W

-----091801Z 112519 /41

O P 091710Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4825

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 0518

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG SL

SUBJ: STUDENTS HAVE GOSL ON THE DEFENSIVE

REF: FREETOWN 472 AND OTHERS

1. SUMMARY: UNREST AND SPORADIC VIOLENCE CONTINUED IN FREETOWN AND SPREAD TO COUNTRYSIDE FEBRUARY 8-9. AT SAME TIME STEVENS HELD MEETINGS WITH STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES AND APPARENTLY AGREED TO ADJOURN PARLIAMENT AND CALL NEW ELECTIONS. IN UNUSUAL 1 A.M. SPEECH FEBRUARY 9, STEVENS WARNED HE WOULD EXERCISE HIS FULL POWERS TO CURB LAWLESSNESS. AFTERNOON FEBRUARY 9 GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED SCHOOLS TO REOPEN FOLLOWING DAY. WHETHER STUDENTS WILL RETURN PEACEFULLY IS UNANSWERED QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

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2. UNREST AND VIOLENCE ERUPTED DURING NIGHT FEBRUARY 8/9 IN FREETOWN WHERE MAIN APC PARTY HEADQUARTERS WAS BADLY DAMAGED BY ROCK THROWING MOB AND POLICE STATION IN TROUBLED EASTERN PART OF CITY WAS FIRED ON. SAME STATION WAS MENACED BY AGGRESSIVE MOB FEBRUARY 9. CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN UNORGANIZED CROWDS AND POLICE CONTINUED IN CENTRAL PART OF CITY. RIOTS WERE REPORTED IN BO, KENEMA, AND MAKENI. AND MOBS ARMED WITH KNIVES

ARE SAID TO HAVE BLOCKED ROADS AROUND KENEMA AND TAIMA AND DEMANDED "GIFTS" TO INSURE SAFE PASSARE.

3. STEVENS MET WITH STUDENT LEADERS ON FEBRUARY 8 AND 9 IN EFFORT APPEASE STUDENTS SO SCHOOLS COULD REOPEN. STUDENTS SUBMITTED NUMEROUS RESOLUTIONS AND DEMANDS, INCLUDING CALL FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS TO BE HELD WITHIN NINE MONTHS. LATE EVENING FEBRUARY 8, STEVENS WAS QUOTED ON NEWS BROADCAST AS SAYING HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROROGUE PARLIAMENT AFTER IT MEETS NEXT WEEK IN ORDER THAT A GENERAL ELECTION MIGHT BE HELD. FOLLOWING DAMAGE TO APC FREETOWN HEADQUARTERS NIGHT FEBRUARY 8, STEVENS MADE UNUSUAL 1 A.M. RADIO BROADCAST FEBRUARY 9 IN WHICH HE DISPLAYED CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TOWARD STUDENTS BUT WARNED HE WAS PREPARED EXERCISE HIS FULL CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS TO INSURE THAT STATE OF EMERGENCY AND CURFEW WERE ENFORCED STRICTLY. HE CONCLUDED BROADCAST BY ADVISING THAT "CONTINUED LAWLESSNESS AND CHAOS HURTS THOSE AT THE TOP."

4. FOLLOWING SECOND STUDENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FEBRUARY 9, AND COMING ON HEELS OF CONTINUED UNREST AND CLASHES IN FREETOWN, GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ALL SCHOOLS WOULD REOPEN FEBRUARY 10.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: ALL HERE ARE ASKING WHETHER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED THAT STEVENS HAS ACCEPTED THEIR DEMANDS AND WHETHER THEY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL RETURN TO SCHOOL AT ALL, AND IF SO, WHETHER THEY DO SO TO STUDY OR TO ORGANIZE FOR FURTHER ASSAULTS ON GOVERNMENT. STUDENTS CLEARLY HAVE GOSL ON THE DEFENSIVE.

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6. WHATEVER MISTAKE STEVENS MADE IN PERMITTING ATTACKS ON UNIVERSITY AND STUDENTS, HIS SUBSEQUENT MOVES HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF A CONCERNED, FATHERLY LEADER. TO SOME EXTENT HE MAY HAVE SUCCEEDED. BUT HE STILL FACES HIS MOST SERIOUS POLITICAL CHALLENGE IN EIGHT YEARS AND HE IS NOT A MAN TO RELINGUISH THE PRESIDENCY WILLINGLY OR GRACEFULLY. END COMMENT
SAMUELS

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Concepts: CIVIL DISORDERS, STUDENTS, RADIO BROADCASTING, POLITICAL CONCESSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Subject: STUDENTS HAVE GOSL ON THE DEFENSIVE
TAGS: PORG, PINS, SL, (STEVENS, SIAKA)
To: STATE
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